



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on August 22, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 514 Main Street. The presiding officer was Sara Volino. Board members present were Paula Silva, Karen Dionne, Brandt Heckert, Kate Dickson, Spencer Morris, Joel Cary, and Mark Lombari. Ex officio member Caroline Wells was present. Board member Darcy DaCosta was absent. Kristin MacDonald was present at the meeting to serve as Secretary to the EDB.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of June 18, 2011

The minutes from the regular meeting held on July 18, 2011 were reviewed by the members via email. Mr. Heckert made a motion to accept the minutes, the motion was seconded by Ms. Dickson, and all members were in favor.

2. Creation of a business retention plan

Mr. Lombari contacted the RIEDC and spoke to Victor Barros regarding available funds for a business retention program. He said he has a meeting planned with the RIEDC to further explore ways to attract new businesses to Warren, to retain businesses in town, and to discuss the possibilities of tax incentive or other benefits to new businesses. Ms. Wells mentioned that Warren, like many other towns in Rhode Island, has a tax stabilization program in place; however, she noted that the benefits of this program are under utilized. Mr. Lombari asked to include an update on the creation of a business retention plan on the September agenda of the EDB.

3. Review and Approval of EDB activities status report to be presented to Town Council

Ms. Volino presented the Board with a list of EDB activities from July 2010 to August 2011. The Board members reviewed each item and made changes and additions as necessary. Ms. Dionne suggested that the meetings regarding the TransArt bus shelter project with Ms. Dickson, Ms. Wells, and RIPTA be added as an additional item. The Board discussed the delays in the parking signage program due to the traffic safety commission's approval of time increments and also invoicing delays with Town Hall and Silktone Graphics. The

Board agreed to describe the parking signage issue as “Completed Phase 1 of the Parking Signage Program”. Ms. Dionne suggested that the item related to the Signage Brochure be phrased as “researched, wrote, and designed an informational piece for Town Hall” to better describe the effort that went into this project. A motion was made by Ms. Dickson to accept the activities list with the above mentioned changes, Ms. Silva seconded, and all members were in favor. Ms. MacDonald stated that she would make the necessary changes; Ms. Volino stated she will send the list to the Town Clerk to be included on the Agenda for the Town Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 13, 2011.

4. Creation of a literature display (brochures, etc.) for Town Hall

Ms. Wells reported that she has been working to improve the public access to Town Hall. She is currently overseeing the installation of a directory for Town Hall which will work as an icon driven sign system to identify the departments by function. She has had two displays installed in the lobby which can hold up to 40 brochures. She requested the EDB to help fill these displays with brochures from local businesses, and possibly also to prompt businesses that do not currently have informational literature to produce a brochure. Ms. Wells suggested that a catalog of the Blount Marine cruise line would be a good item to display at Town Hall. Ms. Silva said that the Warren Arts Initiative could produce some informational literature. Ms. Dickson stated that Discover Warren would have material available for Town Hall.

5. Discussion and Action on request by Town Council to further research parking, specifically in the Water Street area

Ms. Volino reported that Town Council has mandated a parking study for businesses in the downtown, specifically in the Water Street area. She also noted that June Speakman has offered to have a RWU intern available to participate in forming this study. Ms. Wells stated that the parking situation along Water Street is a legitimate concern for economic development in the town of Warren. Ms. Wells left the meeting at this time.

The Board discussed many issues concerning parking in this area, including past studies and other information currently available to the Planning and Zoning Departments, and the need for directional signage and public parking maps. The Board also discussed restaurant valet parking and the potential for shared parking situations, such as the St. Mary of the Bay, Blount, or Burrs Hill parking lots. Mr. Heckert said it would be a good idea to develop a survey which would serve as inventory of current businesses and their existing parking spaces and parking needs. Mr. Morris emphasized the important role of public transportation in Warren and the need to promote the downtown as a “walk friendly” community. The Board agreed that the goal of the study would be to document the current and long term parking requirements along Water Street. Mr. Heckert, Mr. Cary, and Ms. Dickson will work together to formulate a parking survey and will contact Ms. Speakman regarding the participation of a RWU student intern.

A motion was made to adjourn, the motion was seconded, and all members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald

Minutes submitted by Kristin MacDonald
September 12, 2011

